

SHEILA L. WEINER

# FROM GUPTA TO PĀLA SCULPTURE

Reprinted from *Artibus Asiae*, volume XXV

1962



BUS ASIAE · PUBLISHERS — ASCONA · SWITZERLAND

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार  
पुस्तकालय



विषय संख्या ७३०.९५४

पुस्तक संख्या W ३७८

भागत पञ्जिका संख्या ५६,७३९

पुस्तक पर सर्व प्रकार की निशानियाँ

लगाना वर्जित है। कृपया १५ दिन से अधिक

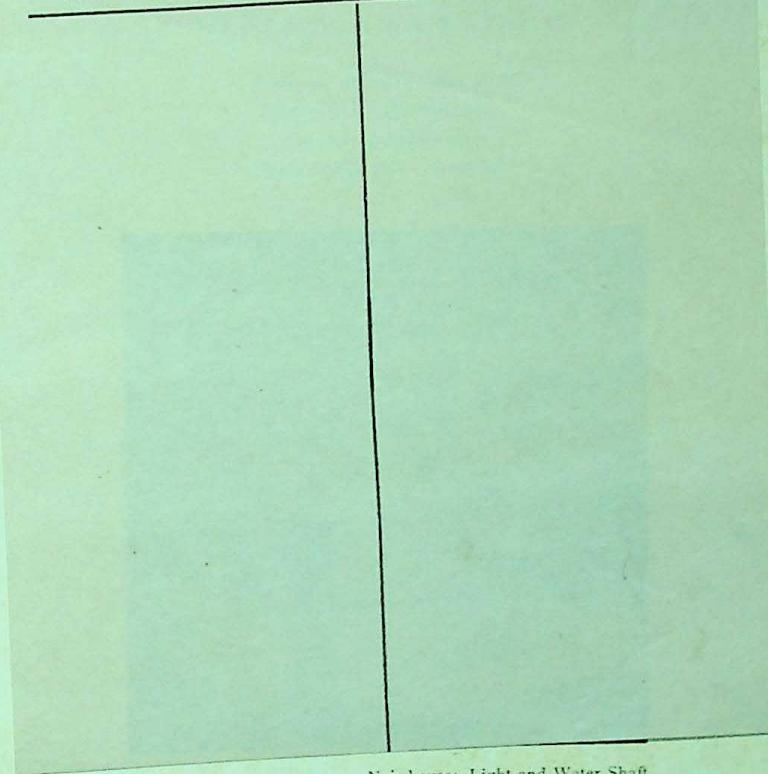
समय तक पुस्तक अपने पास न रखें।

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय  
पुस्तकालय  
हरिद्वार

पुस्तकालय  
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार

वर्ग 730.954 आगत संख्या 56739  
W 37 F

पुस्तक-वितरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है। इस तिथि सहित  
३० वे दिन तक यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापिस आ जानी  
चाहिए। अन्यथा ५० पैसे प्रति दिन के हिसाब से विलम्ब-दण्ड  
लगेगा।



Nair house; Light and Water Shaft



MCMLXI

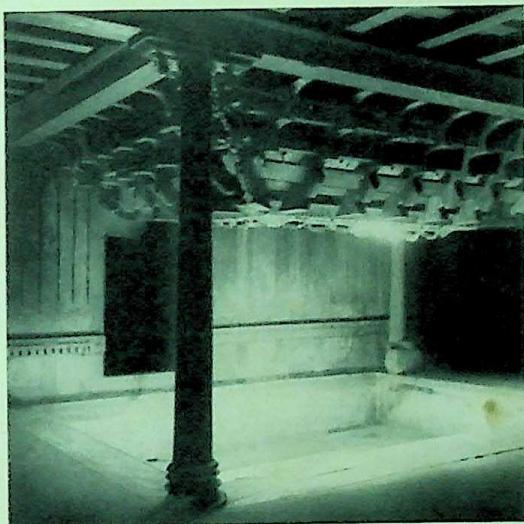
ARTIBUS ASIAE · PUBLISHERS, ASCONA · SWITZERLAND

DRĀVIDA AND KERALA  
IN THE ART OF TRAVANCORE

BY

STELLA KRAMRISCH

*Professor of South Asian art,  
University of Pennsylvania.  
Curator of Indian art,  
Philadelphia Museum of art*



Nair house; Light and Water Shaft



MCMLXI

ARTIBUS ASIAE · PUBLISHERS, ASCONA · SWITZERLAND

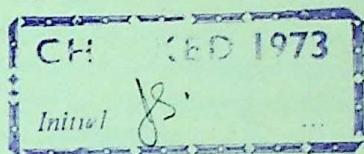
876 46 JECQ 1858-1868



SHEILA L. WEINER

FROM GUPTA TO PALA SCULPTURE

Reprinted from *Artibus Asiae*, volume XXV



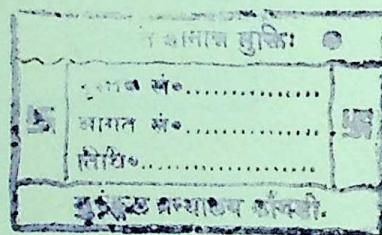
MCMLXII

ARTIBUS ASIÆ · PUBLISHERS · ASCONA · SWITZERLAND

MUNSHIRAM MANOHAR  
General & Foreign Books  
P. O. Box 1000, New Delhi - 110 001

730.954

W37F



SHEILA L. WEINER

## FROM GUPTA TO PĀLA SCULPTURE

**T**hroughout the development of Indian art and regardless of religious differences — Buddhist, Hindu, or Jain — the attitude toward representation remains essentially the same. The body is conceived as an idea. The beauty of an Indian image is not dependent upon the structural relationship of one part of the body to another. The figure is, on the contrary, a composite organism, suggestive of the capabilities of the body, but never of interdependent parts. The leg that bends at the knee tell us that the knee bends, but there is no defined structural relationship between it and the rest of the body. The Indian figure is rather tied together by a strong solidity and roundness of volume, a smoothness of surfaces that flow into one another, and the rhythm of a continuously easy moving line.

The style of the Gupta period from the late fifth century to the seventh most completely epitomizes these characteristics of the Indian mode of perception in their purest form. The fusion, the clarity, the vigor, and the strong sense of volume that are all part of the experimentation in the previous centuries, settle and are stabilized. The non-essentials of the peculiarly Indian perception are disregarded. Out of all that preceded it, there emerges finally and most vividly in the Gupta period the strong sense of volume, together with the clearly delineated composite figure that fills rather than exists in space, that suggests rather than realizes the nature of the human body (Figure 1).

By contrast with the simplicity and purity of the Gupta period, the Pāla art which followed from the late eighth through the eleventh centuries is attenuated and adulterated. In principle, the attitude toward the body is the same, but the figure is slimmer, longer, and rounder, and the torso and limbs are stiffer and more columnar. The outline of the figure and the articulation of the joints are sharper, and the transitions from one plane to another less subtle. The ornamentation is enriched and enlivened. The pose is more exaggerated. There is often greater movement, but this movement is centripetal, is directed inward, and tends to enhance and reinforce rather than distract from the central core and volume of the body (Figure 2).

This style developed from that of the Gupta. The stylistic changes first manifested in Sārnāth in the late fifth century set the tone for the developments that were to occur in the seventh and eighth centuries, not only in Sāñchi and Deogarh to the west, but also to the east at Nālandā and Pāhārpur, in Bihar and Bengal, which in the transitional period became the important centers of artistic development that culminated in the Pāla style.

The earliest dated images that we have from Sārnāth are three standing Buddha figures with

inscriptions on their pedestals. The earliest of the inscriptions refers to the year 473–474, and the other two to 476–477<sup>1</sup>.

Of the three images, the oldest (Figure 3) is the finest, and curiously, although there is only a difference of two or three years between the execution of it and the two others (Figures 4 and 5), it is somewhat closer to the Mathurān idiom. Compared to the other two Sārnāth figures the head of Figure 3 is heavier, the shoulders broader and the articulation of the contrapposto and joints a bit more emphasized. When the figure is compared, however, to images belonging to the first half of the century, such as the Udayagiri Varāha<sup>2</sup>, the seated headless Jain image of the twenty-fourth Tīrthaṅkara Varddhamāna Mahāvira of 432–433 from Mathurā<sup>3</sup>, or the seated Mankuwar Buddha of 448–449<sup>4</sup>, a greater elegance and diminution of the torso and limbs is at once noted. The overpowering sense of weightiness that characterized the earlier images is mitigated and almost entirely lacking. Unlike the older images, neither the 473–474 figure nor the 476–477 figures give the impression of being supported by a counterbalance of weights. Rather, they seem not to be supported at all; not to be held together either by the volume of one part acting upon the other or by any revealed organic interrelationship of the body structure. The slender legs and cursorily modeled feet, which appear to be on tip toe, in no way indicate that they support the figure. What imparts a sense of unity to the figure is a continuously easy moving line and the flow of smoothly modeled surfaces.

Whereas in the sculptures dating to the first half of the century the additive quality of the figures is heightened by a sense of a counterforce of weights, which does not exist in the Sārnāth figures, the basic attitude toward the body as an aggregate of parts remains evident and in these later pieces is emphasized by the appearance of an accentuated roll of flesh just beneath the navel with a deeply incised line below that sharply cuts the figure. This characteristic, or, in the case of seated figures, just the deeply incised line, is evident on all later images. On Bodhisattva or Brahmanical images it may be obscured by the girdle or dhoti, but then the girdle or belt of the dhoti itself will serve the same purpose.

In three standing Buddha images from Sārnāth, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, we encounter a certain hesitancy that would indicate a groping toward something new (Figures 6, 7 and 8). On the surface, all three are closely allied to the 476–477 images from Sārnāth (Figures 5 and 6), and are most probably their immediate successors. However, when compared with the inscribed images, the three Calcutta Museum figures are weak statements of their prototype. The proportions are uncertain. The figures are striving to be more elegant; the head is smaller, the limbs are further elongated, the torso is narrower, shorter and less articulated, and less weighty. All of this would tend to indicate that these figures are later, rather than earlier, than the dated images.

The Indian Museum attributes all three to the fifth century. Possibly they belong to the very last quarter of the century. When juxtaposed to the 473–477 figures and another Sārnāth image which is also in the Calcutta Museum, and to which the Museum also affixes a fifth century date (Figure 9), the evolution becomes apparent. It appears that the artists of Sārnāth were

<sup>1</sup> H. Hargreaves, "Excavations at Sārnāth", *ASR, Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report 1914–1915* (1920), pp. 124–126, 130–131.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, New York, Pantheon, 1955, II, Pl. 109.

<sup>3</sup> R. D. Banerji, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, Benares, Benares Hindu University, 1933, pp. 37–38, Pl. XVIII.

<sup>4</sup> Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, London, Edward Goldston, 1927, Pl. XLIII, Fig. 162.

striving toward a clearer understanding of the human figure and in Figure 9 they perhaps came as close as they ever would to a convincing realization of the body as an unified organism. In spite of its too elongated limbs, its undefined legs and uncertain contraposto, the figure reflects a unity achieved by smoothly and subtly modeled surfaces within an overall rhythmic line, that was not previously realized, and that must bring us to the sixth century. The contrast between it and the other images is too great to warrant simply a difference in workmanship, and not one of date.

What appears to have arisen in Sārnāth during the sixth century as apparent in the evolution of the Buddha figures is a concern for an understanding of the human body and its movements closer to reality. And while we have no images which we can, with any substantiating proof, attribute to the sixth century, we have carvings from the seventh century which on the basis of outside evidence can with reasonable certainty be dated. These seventh century works reflect the results of the experimentation that must have gone on in Sārnāth during the previous century and which is evident in several extant images from Sārnāth and elsewhere.

Furthermore, that the sixth century should have been a period of groping and experimentation, makes sense historically. It was a period of great turmoil. The history of the period is itself uncertain. Communications between one center and another were disrupted by the collapse of the Imperial Guptas and the rise of local leaders. There was no central authority or strong center from which religious ideas and artistic prototypes could emanate. Buddhism was on the decline and in many areas Buddhists were persecuted. In fact, in the proliferation of artistic pieces which were produced in the seventh century a new pantheon of Buddhist-Hindu images emerges in which the Brahmanical aspects are most evident.

Belonging most probably to the end of the sixth century or the early seventh is the "Gupta" temple at Deogarh, so named by Cunningham, who was the first to describe it, because "it possesses all the characteristics of the style of the Gupta period, although its pyramidal roof points to a later date than that of the flat-roofed temples of Sāñchī, Eran, and Tigāwā".<sup>5</sup> The temple, which is dedicated to Viṣṇu and also referred to as the Daśavatāra temple, is located in Jhansi district. It is northeast of Sāñchī and southwest of Sārnāth.

The date of the temple is almost universally agreed upon on the basis of its architectural structure, that is, its tapering roof. The spire itself was already in ruins when Cunningham viewed the temple, but the lower portions on the east side were still intact, "and several specimens of the *āmalaka* fruit, which forms the special ornament of a Hindu spire", were still lying about. Cunningham's own impression was that "the Deogarh temple cannot well be placed earlier than A. D. 600, or later than 700".<sup>6</sup> R. D. Banerji notes that at Deogarh is found the first example in northern India of a *sikharā*, which did not until the seventh century become a regular feature of Indian temples. On the basis of that and a two-line pillar inscription, which he considers to be in characters of the late sixth century, Banerji assigns the temple to ca. 575,<sup>7</sup> which closely parallels Cunningham's date. Madho Sarup Vats, however, and Daya Ram Sahni who in 1918 discovered the inscription to which Banerji refers, prefer to attribute the temple to the last quarter of the fifth century or the first quarter of the sixth. Vats' decision is based prima-

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India*, X (1880), 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-153.

rily on Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra's judgement of the style of the script<sup>8</sup>. Mr. Chhabra's statement, however, is somewhat equivocal:

I have carefully studied the paleography of that two-line Deogarh pillar inscription. I would place it in the last quarter of the fifth century or the first quarter of the sixth century A. D. The tripartite form of *y* points to its early character, while the looped *m* and developed *r*, combined with the half-developed *matra* strokes would show later stages in the development of the script<sup>9</sup>.

Considering that there seems to be disagreement between two authorities regarding the dating of the style of the inscription, that Mr. Chhabra's statement is uncertain, and that the architectural evidence tends toward a later date, I believe that the "Gupta" temple at Deogarh most probably belongs to the period between the last quarter of the sixth and the first quarter of the seventh century. Moreover, for two other reasons, I am inclined to believe that the temple belongs to the early seventh rather than late sixth century. First, the earliest known temple in Northern India with a *sikharā* that we can date with certainty is the Muṇḍeśvarī temple. We know from the inscription, now in the Indian Museum in Calcutta<sup>10</sup>, that the temple was in existence in 635—636. And second, it is not until the time of Harṣa, 606—647, that northern India was again united and enjoyed a sufficiently long period of peace for a program of temple building to have been undertaken, especially in the western regions.

In the three reliefs adorning the sides of the "Gupta" sanctum at Deogarh there appear a liveliness and a sweeping sense of line of a sort that is not previously encountered in either the Udayagiri Varāha relief or any of the individual figures of the fifth century. Not one of these images is to be seen in a simple pose. On the contrary all are moving or striking a pose in motion. The heads, the legs, the arms, the torsos, all suggest counter directions, and the most varied movements of which the human body can be imagined capable, even if we ignore Viṣṇu's four arms. And although in the Anantaśayī panel<sup>11</sup> Viṣṇu is depicted in a position of repose — lying on the world serpent — there is nothing restful about the plastic statement. The god is delineated by a continually moving line and the sense of movement which the line creates is further heightened by the serpentine quality of the figure's garland.

The figures of these three panels are endowed with what is really a belying sense of organic movement; for in fact the movement is all on the surface, created for the most part by the varied directions of the parts of the body. We need only look more closely at the figures themselves to realize that there is nothing inherent in the plastic quality of the body itself which holds it together, or allows it to move as it does. This is perhaps particularly obvious in the figures of Viṣṇu who appears seated on a Garuḍa and the Nāga and Nāgi in the "Gajendra Mokṣa" panel<sup>12</sup>, which depicts the deity releasing the elephant from the clutches of the coils which entwine him; it is least obvious in the figures of the "Nara-Nārāyaṇa" panel<sup>13</sup>.

The two figures, Nara to the left and Nārāyaṇa to the right, are in a position of performing

<sup>8</sup> Madho Sarup Vats, *The Gupta Temple at Deogarh*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 70, Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1952, pp. 10—11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammed Hamid Kuraishi, *Ancient Monuments of Bihar and Orissa*, New Imperial Series, LI, Calcutta, Archaeological Survey of India, 1931, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> Vats, *op. cit.*, Pl. 10b.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 10a.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 11a.

penance. Together, the two are considered to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In the figure of Nara we note a modeling of the torso which on the surface is deceptively convincing. But on closer examination, it is obvious that there is no structural unity between the arms and the torso, no syndrome of muscular activity in the arms or legs that in an organically modeled figure would be concomitant with the movement of the figure as a whole. In fact, what unites the broad shoulders with the arms, head, and torso, and holds them together in such a way as to diminish the additive quality of the figure are the locks of hair which fall from the head and across the shoulders and thereby confine the figure. The counter directions of the upper and lower portions of the limbs figuratively maintain and support the torso, but in reality the slender long legs are incapable of bearing the body's weight.

The Deogarh reliefs from the sides of the sanctum represent, I believe, the culmination of an attempt to deal with the human figure in its functional aspects and a more realistic manner. The endeavour to deal with the movement and proportions of the figure more realistically is even more evident in the somewhat simpler but more freely executed reliefs from the walls (Fig. 10) and projections (Figs. 11 to 13) of the platform on which the sanctum stands.

The subject matter of many of the panels which adorned the platform is believed to have been derived from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The scene depicted in Figure 10 "may be identified as the birthstory of Kṛṣṇa, who immediately after he was born inside a prison at Mathurā is stated to have been transferred by his father Vasudeva to the care of his friend Nanda at Gokula in order to save the child from the homicidal wrath of Kāṁsa, the king of Mathurā"<sup>14</sup>.

Aside from the fact that five Muṇḍeśvarī images (Figs. 14 to 18) in the Patna Museum<sup>15</sup> appear to be the work of an inferior hand, in many ways they closely follow the Deogarh reliefs. Between the image depicted in Figure 14, which the Patna Museum identifies as Brahmā but Kuraishi believed might be Śiva<sup>16</sup>, and the central figure of the right half of Figure 13 the resemblance is most striking. The pose is almost identical. The modeling of the torso of the figure on the Deogarh platform relief is obscured, but it is obvious that the contours of the Muṇḍeśvarī figure's torso closely parallel those of the Nara image from the "Nara-Nārāyaṇa" panel on the Deogarh sanctum.

In the four other images from Muṇḍeśvarī (Figs. 15 to 18) there is a noticeable lack of agility and an increased stiffness compared to the Deogarh images. In part this may be attributable to a difference in workmanship, but in part it also heralds what is to come in the later portions of the seventh century. In the execution of details, however, further similarities are noticeable between the Deogarh and Muṇḍeśvarī images; as for example in the treatment of the facial features, headdress, hair and necklace in the Muṇḍeśvarī Sūrya image (Fig. 15) and a Viṣṇu Anantaśayī fragment from Deogarh<sup>17</sup>, in the execution of the breasts on the Chāṇḍī image from Muṇḍeśvarī (Fig. 16) and the figure of Devakī in the Kṛṣṇa relief from Deogarh (Fig. 10), and finally, in the wavy incised lines of the dhoti on both the "Bodhisattva" from Muṇḍeśvarī (Fig. 17) and the Deogarh dancers (Fig. 11).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Although the Patna Museum offers no more specific provenance for these images than Shāhābād District, Bihar, and simply classifies them as "Gupta", they fit perfectly to a description of the images found at Muṇḍeśvarī. See Kuraishi, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>17</sup> Vats, *op. cit.*, Pl. 22a.

Aside from the architectural similarities between Deogarh and Muṇḍeśvarī, already noted, the relationships evident in the sculpture of the two temples would also tend to support a late sixth or early seventh century date for Deogarh.

Although the basic attitude toward the human body as indicated in the 473–477 figures from Sārnāth (Figs. 3 to 5), on the one hand, and the late sixth or seventh century Deogarh and Muṇḍeśvarī figures, on the other, is essentially the same, there is, unmistakably apparent in the later figures, as we have tried to show, a concern for greater movement and a more realistic understanding of bodily proportions. The Deogarh and Muṇḍeśvarī sculptures represent the culmination of a century of experimentation. The new elements which they reflect did not and could not have suddenly and unaccountably appeared in as sweeping a manner; the differences are too great. Having noted the differences between works a century or more apart, it now seems possible to fill in the gap.

The beginnings of the groping and progression which occurred in the sixth century are perhaps to be first noted in the four standing Buddhas (Figs. 6 to 9) in the Calcutta Museum. Figure 9 compared to the 473–477 images from Sārnāth is markedly advanced. Very close to it, and most probably just pre-dating it, are two standing Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara images from Sārnāth: one in the Calcutta Museum (Fig. 1) and the other in the National Museum, New Delhi<sup>18</sup>. In these, as in Figure 9, there are a grace and rhythm, and a tantalizingly convincing grasp of the contours and proportions of the human body that do not appear in the earlier images. The suggested contrapposto is more definite, and the dhoti in keeping with the stance of the figure is angled at the hem. Rather than confining the figure, it suggestively moves with it. The drapery, although formal, is less rigid, and in the manner in which the garment passes over and between the legs both the flexibility of the cloth and the contours of the limbs are more clearly stated.

Although the Indian imagination never mastered the human figure according to Western standards, further indications of its concern with the potentialities of the body are evident in two Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi images from Sāñchī of greyish-white sandstone (Figs. 19 and 20). Marshall arbitrarily attributes the two images to the fifth century<sup>19</sup>. Nowhere does he substantiate his attribution. Stylistically, the two images in no way conform to any of the known fifth century figures. The modeling of the knees, the treatment of the dhoti, the drapery and the elaborate necklace all indicate a later date and fit in well in the evolutionary pattern of the sixth century. As in previous figures the contrapposto is misinterpreted, but in Figure 20 the statement is firmer: the bend of the elbows, the thrust of the hip, and the articulation of the bent knee are more evident. In fact, in this image we encounter for the first time, among those that we have examined, an obvious concern for the articulation of the feet and an understanding of their function in the contrapostal pose. And the dhoti, which is now shorter, no longer encumbers the legs. Although the heavy drapery behind the two figures is what in fact supports them, it is more plastically conceived and lacks the sterile rigidity of earlier drapery.

To this period must also belong the delightful stucco images that formerly adorned the base

<sup>18</sup> Zimmer, *op. cit.*, Pl. 108a.

<sup>19</sup> John Marshall and Alfred Foucher, *The Monuments of Sāñchī*, Calcutta, Government of India Press, n. d., III, Pl. description 125b and 125c.

of the cylindrical structure of Maniyār Maṭh in the old city of Rājgir, south of Patna (Fig. 21). Unfortunately, inspite of precautions undertaken to conserve the images, all but one — a badly damaged Gaṇeśa — have disappeared.

The massive masonry structure with its stucco figures around the base was exposed by T. Bloch in the 1905–1906 excavations of the site. The images, which were all about two feet high, included a liṅga garlanded with flowers, a crowned four-armed figure, a Nāginī and five Nāgas canopied with serpent hoods, a seated Gaṇeśa entwined by cobras, and a nude six-armed dancing Śiva. The lower portion where the images stood is considered to be the only extant remains of the original structure<sup>20</sup>. Bloch identified the various Nāga and Nāginī figures as belonging to “some kind of ‘Pantheon of Rājagrha’” representative of serpent deities popularly worshipped in the surrounding locality<sup>21</sup>. Recent discoveries further indicate that the site was a center of serpent worship<sup>22</sup>.

Bloch dated the figures between ca. 350 and 500<sup>23</sup>. Smith, who discusses only one of the images, refers it simply to the “Gupta age”<sup>24</sup>, and Coomaraswamy just as simply inclines toward the fifth century<sup>25</sup>. The execution of the images themselves, however, indicates that they belong to the late sixth century. They relate neither to pre-450 images nor directly to the 473–477 Sārnāth figures, but reflect the influence of the groping evident in the later images: a better understanding of human proportions, a more open, unencumbered, and clearly stated pose as in the Bodhisattva images from Sāñchī (Figs. 19 and 20), and a subtler modelling of the torso which closely parallels that of the Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara image from Sārnāth in the New Delhi Museum.

In turn, the relation of the Maniyār Maṭh figures with the Deogarh figures becomes clear, if we compare for example the stucco Nāginī<sup>26</sup> with the figure of Devakī in the Deogarh relief (Fig. 10), or the treatment of the hair and dhoti of the two Nāga images from Rājgir depicted in the center of Figure 21 with that of Vasudeva in the same Deogarh relief (Fig. 10) or the Nāga in the Gajendra-mokṣa panel, or finally the drapery of the girdles of the male figures on the Maniyār Maṭh drum (Fig. 21) with those on the Deogarh platform reliefs (Figs. 12 and 13).

Furthermore, we know of no earlier stucco images to be found anywhere in India. It is significant that the fifth phase of Stūpa III at Nālandā, which is just seven miles from Rājgir, is also decorated in stucco and at the earliest belongs to the seventh century. Hsüan-tsang, who visited Nālandā ca. 625, wrote a detailed account of the Buddhist center, but none of the attempts to identify the uncovered stūpas with those that he described have been successful, whereas other extant ruins do conform to his descriptions<sup>27</sup>. Thus it would appear that the stucco decorated stūpa had not yet been constructed. Due to the fact that Rājgir and Nālandā are so close to one another and no other stucco images of an earlier date are known, it is further likely that the Maniyār Maṭh figures could not pre-date the Nālandā images by many years. Moreover,

<sup>20</sup> Kuraishi, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>21</sup> T. Bloch, *A.S.R., E.C.*, 1905–1906, pp. 14–15.

<sup>22</sup> M. H. Kuraishi, *Rājgir*, rev. A. Ghosh, 4th ed., Delhi, Department of Archaeology, 1956, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> T. Bloch, *A.S.R., E.C.*, 1905–1906, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Vincent A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911, p. 164.

<sup>25</sup> Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>26</sup> Zimmer, *op. cit.*, Pl. 105 b.

<sup>27</sup> A. Ghosh, *A Guide to Nālandā*, Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1939, p. 42.

it is more than likely than an inexpensive material such as stucco would first be introduced in an unsettled and turbulent period, and thus would further support a sixth century date for the Maniyār Māṭh figures.

The experimentations of the sixth century, for the most part, appear to have come to an end by the second quarter of the seventh century, and there is a return to the hieratic traditions evident in the fifth century productions of the Sārnāth workshops. A certain stiffness was already evident in many of the Deogarh reliefs, and heralded in the Muṇḍeśvarī images. Many of the results of the sixth century are incorporated into the later works, but the figures stiffen and the suggestion of movement is frozen.

#### THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES

With the restoration of a modicum of political stability in the seventh century, first under Harṣa from 606–647, and then with the coming into prominence again of the Later Guptas in Magadha, there appears to have been a revival of religious and artistic activity. Under Harṣa communications seem to have been somewhat restored between east and west, as the influences that traveled from Sāñchī to Deogarh, Rājgir, and Muṇḍeśvarī appear to indicate, and we know that Harṣa's court was a traveling one. Under the Later Guptas artistic activity appears to be limited primarily to the eastern areas, Bihar and Bengal, and the hieratic influence of Sārnāth again comes into prominence and is especially noticeable in the workshops of Nālandā.

Most probably the reassertion of the Sārnāth influence did not occur until late in Harṣa's reign, which ended in 647. The stiff and closed quality of a Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 22) and a Nāga image (Fig. 23) from Sāñchī, as well as a Harihara pillar relief from Shāhābād district (Fig. 24) is more closely akin to the Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara images from Sāñchī (Figs. 19 and 20) than to the hieratic tradition of the 473–477 images reflected in the Nālandā stucco figure of Buddha with an alms' bowl adorning the main stūpa<sup>28</sup>. Thus it would appear that in the seventh century a rigidity independent of the revival of the older Sārnāth influence was already setting in.

Marshall attributes both the Vajrapāṇi<sup>29</sup> and Nāga<sup>30</sup> images to the fifth century as he did the two Padmapāṇi images<sup>31</sup> to which they must be related. As in the case of the two Padmapāṇi images, the columnar quality of the torsos, the emphasis on the separation of the legs and the shorter unconfining dhotis distinguish the Vajrapāṇi and Nāga figures from images of the fifth century. The incised lines of the dhoti, the heavy treatment of the necklace and headdress, and the fluted nimbus of Figure 22 are identical to those of Figure 19 from which they must have been derived. But added to the Vajrapāṇi image are a rigidity and cursory modeling of the torso lacking in the Padmapāṇi figure, and further intensified in the Nāga by an elongation of the limbs, a stiffer stance, and a harsher line.

Although we cannot be sure that the Harihara relief (Fig. 24) in the Patna Museum comes from Muṇḍeśvarī, it is more than likely. It was found in Shāhābād District and is of the same

<sup>28</sup> Zimmer, *op. cit.*, Pl. 377.

<sup>29</sup> Marshall and Foucher, *op. cit.*, I, 50–51.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, III, Pl. description 125b.

<sup>31</sup> *Supra*, p. 172.

red sandstone as the other Muṇḍeśvari images. The same attenuating rigidity that characterizes the evolution of the Sāñchī images from the earlier Padmapāṇi to the Vajrapāṇi and the Nāga figures is evident in the differences between the ca. 635–636 Muṇḍeśvari images (Figs. 14 to 17) and the Harihara relief.

#### *Benisagar*

Most probably belonging to the late Harṣa or Śaśāṅka era is a Viṣṇu image (Fig. 25) and two of Gaṇeśa (Figs. 26 and 27) from Benisagar, now in the Patna Museum, as well as a third Gaṇeśa (Fig. 28) and a Lakuliśa image still in the village (Fig. 29). Benisagar is a small village in Singhbhūm District, in southeastern Bihar, close to the Orissan and Bengal borders. A complex of temples, now abandoned and in ruins, formerly existed on an island in the southeast corner of a tank to the north of the village. Aside from the stylistic affinities evident between the five Benisagar figures and those from Shāhābād District (Figs. 15 to 17 and 24), the Lakuliśa image is especially important iconographically and historically.

All of the Benisagar images are Brahmanical and most of them Śaivite<sup>32</sup>. Beglar, Assistant Director of Archaeology under Cunningham, was uncertain, however, as to the identification of the Lakuliśa image<sup>33</sup>. Because of its resemblance to Buddha images with hands in an attitude of teaching or *dharmaṭakra mudrā*, and “its general resemblance to figures in Magadha”, he considered it to be Buddhist or possibly Jain.

Lakuliśa itself, is most probably derived from the Sanskrit word *laguḍa* or stick, and the figure does in fact have a club as do two Lakuliśa images, both from Orissa, published by J. N. Banerjea. Banerjea, moreover, notes that the god is also known as Lakuṭāpāṇīśa, the god with a club in his hand<sup>34</sup>. In the Benisagar image as in all instances the deity is represented as ithyphallic. He is considered to be the twenty-eighth incarnation of Śiva and also believed to be the founder or systematizer of the Śaivite Pāśupata sect<sup>35</sup>, which probably accounts for his representation as a teacher.

Pāśupata Śaivism is believed to be the oldest form of Śaivism practised in northern India, and the sect adhered to in Bengal<sup>36</sup>. Both Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa and Śaśāṅka, eastern kings and contemporaries of Harṣa, were devout Śaivite worshipers. Bhāskaravarman was an ally of Harṣa in his campaign against Śaśāṅka, a fiercely anti-Buddhist king. Benisagar lies within the area of Harṣa’s and Śaśāṅka’s campaigns. Thus the preponderance of Śaivite images at Benisagar, the several Gaṇeśa, and especially the unusual Lakuliśa would tend to substantiate, from what we know of the religious and political history of the period, a seventh century date for the Benisagar figures on stylistic grounds.

Remnants of the sixth century concern for movement are still evident in the lateral figures of the Viṣṇu representation (Fig. 25). But Viṣṇu himself is unmistakably rigid, and reminiscent of

<sup>32</sup> Other than those in the Patna Museum (Figures 25 to 27), the remainder are still in the village. Aside from Figures 25 to 29, all are of a later date and therefore I have not included reproductions of them.

<sup>33</sup> Cunningham, *op. cit.*, XIII, 70.

<sup>34</sup> J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1956, Pl. XXIX, Fig. 1, Pl. XL, Fig. 2, pp. 480–481. For a further discussion of Pāśupati practices and beliefs, see also, Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Madras, Law Printing House, 1916, II, pt. 1, 17–23.

<sup>35</sup> Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 450–452.

<sup>36</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Dacca, University of Dacca, 1943, I, 405–406.

the Sūrya image from Muṇḍeśvarī (Fig. 15). Moreover, the position of his outer arms serves to confine the outward movement suggested by the two side figures. Similarly, the modeling of the three Gaṇeśa figures (Figs. 26 to 28) approximates that of the probably closely contemporary Shāhabād figures (Figs. 14 to 18 and 24): the emphasis on the separation of the chest and torso, the protruding abdomen, and the confining boxed-in quality, which in the Gaṇeśa images is further enhanced by the placement of the legs and arms which clearly demarcates the outer limits of the figures.

Unfortunately, the Lakuliśa image (Fig. 29) is badly damaged, but it is significant that unlike any of the earlier seated Buddhist or Brahmanical images or the two later Lakuliśa images that Banerjea reproduces, the legs are drawn in toward the body and seemingly held in place by a band or *yogapaṭa* that crosses in front. Banerjea describes a similar pose which may at times be used in Lakuliśa images. However, in the pose which he delineates, the *utkuṭikāsana*, the forearms rest on the knees and the hands come forward<sup>37</sup>. In the Benisagar image the arms turn inward at the elbow and the hands are in a teaching position. The mass of the figure is thus sharply delineated by an inflexible line that curves always inward.

### Nālandā

Nālandā, in the time of Hsüan-tsang, was a renowned and thriving center of Buddhist learning. Pilgrims from far and wide came to study there. According to Hsüan-tsang.

In the establishment were some thousands of Brethren, all men of great ability and learning, several hundreds being highly esteemed and famous; the Brethren were very strict in observing the precepts and regulations of their Order; they were looked up to as models by all India; learning and discussing they found the day too short; day and night they admonished each other, juniors and seniors mutually helping to perfection. If among them were any who did not talk of the mysteries of the *Tripitaka* such persons being ashamed, lived aloof. Hence foreign students came to the establishment to put an end to their doubts and then became celebrated, and those who stole the name of Nālandā Brother were all treated with respect wherever they went. Of those from abroad who wished to enter the schools of discussion the majority, beaten by the difficulties of the problems, withdrew; and those who were deeply versed in old and modern learning were admitted, only two or three out of ten succeeding<sup>38</sup>.

Fa-hsien made no mention of the "university" and it is therefore unlikely that it was in existence in his time. According to the names of the sovereigns whom Hsüan-tsang cites as having built the first monasteries<sup>39</sup>, construction must have begun at the earliest in the last half of the fifth century. As previously mentioned, none of his descriptions of the buildings which he saw can be matched to the Main Stūpa (Site 3, Phase 5). Most probably it had not yet been constructed. Seven integuments were found on the site. The first three were the smallest and were again covered over after the excavations. The fifth, which is the best preserved, is also the most important because of the stucco figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas adorning its corner towers and surviving facades.

<sup>37</sup> Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 272, Pl. IV, Fig. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Oriental Translation Fund, New Series, XV, London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1905, II, 165.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

The stucco sculptures adorning the Stūpa reflect the influence of the late fifth century Sārnāth school combined with the experimentations of the sixth century, a most likely combination. It is to be expected that a relatively new center of Buddhist learning should look back to the workshops of an older Buddhist center for direction, and the stucco reliefs are the earliest known images from Nālandā. Whether the artists at Nālandā were familiar with the fifth century Sārnāth works as a result of actually having visited the older site, or images were brought to Bihar, is impossible to say. At least one Buddha image, which is very close to the 473–474 Sārnāth figure (Fig. 3), the famous Biharail Buddha (Fig. 30) was found as far east as Bengal, and as its name implies, in Biharail in Rājshāhi District. The image is of Chunar sandstone and so close to the 473–474 image that there can be little doubt that it was executed at the Sārnāth workshop and transported<sup>40</sup>. Aside from the possibility of the Nālandā artists having seen such images, it is likely that they were influenced as well by the Rājgir figures (Fig. 21), just seven miles away.

The influence of the fifth century Sārnāth images, especially the 473–474 type, is apparent in the return to the broad and flattened chest and the rigid and confining hem line of the dhoti of the Buddha figures adorning the Nālandā stūpa. But unlike the early Sārnāth works, we find in these an exaggerated statement of the pose, a greater emphasis upon the separation of the legs, a firmer stance, and a sharper narrowing of the torso from the chest to the waist, such as we encountered at Rājgir (Fig. 21). The lateral folds of the drapery are softer, even in the Buddha images, than on the early Sārnāth figures (Figs. 3 and 30) and closer again to the Rājgir drapery. This becomes even more evident in a comparison of the drapery of the Nālandā Bodhisattva (Fig. 31) with that of an early Sārnāth image, on the one hand, and the Rājgir figures (Fig. 21), on the other.

This combination of influences which appears in the Nālandā stucco figures reflects a certain ambivalence on the part of the sculptors, a wavering between the plastic conception of the older Sārnāth school as represented, for example, by the Biharail Buddha (Fig. 30), and that of the sixth and early seventh works as seen, for example, in the Deogarh Anantaśāyin and Narā-Nārāyaṇa panels and the Viṣṇu Anantaśāyin fragment and Rājgir figures (Fig. 21). These divergencies are more successfully reconciled in another of the Nālandā stucco figures (Fig. 32). Compared to the 473–474 Sārnāth Buddha (Fig. 3) or the Biharail Buddha (Fig. 30) and two other Nālandā figures (the Buddha with alms' bowl and Fig. 31) the torso of the seated Bodhisattva is round. In comparison to the Deogarh or Rājgir works, it is flat. And although the figure is seated, it is apparent that the sculptor has adopted the elongated proportions of the more recent works.

This reconciliation of the broad chest with the more columnar and slimmer torso, and the elongated limbs, combined with an increased stiffness and a movement suggested only by the outline of the image, marks the final stage in the transition between the Gupta and Pāla styles.

Few stone images were found at Nālandā compared to the vast number of small bronze figures for which Nālandā is well known. Both the style of these metal images and the inscriptive evidence available indicate that at the very earliest they belong to the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth. I-ching who reached India in 673 and studied at Nālandā,

<sup>40</sup> S. K. Saraswati assumes that because of its find place, the image was locally executed. See S. K. Saraswati, "Early Sculpture of Bengal", *Journal of the Department of Letters*, XXX, Calcutta, 1937, p. 20.

described the curriculum in great detail, but made no mention of any school of metal casting. Moreover, the earliest inscribed bronze image found at Nālandā is dated to the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Devapāla, that is, c. 836. Most probably it was under the aegis of the early Pālas that the art of metal casting developed at Nālandā.

The metal image referred to above is a four armed representation of Viṣṇu nine inches high (Fig. 33)<sup>41</sup>. In his hands Viṣṇu holds the usual conch, disc, mace, and lotus. Hanging from his arms is a long garland known as the *vanamālā*. Above his head is a seven hooded serpent canopy supported by two vertical bars adorned with leogryphs, beneath which on either side there stands a small female image, probably Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu's two wives. The image is heavily adorned with weighty ornaments which for the most part follow their own course, independent of the body contours of the figure's stance. From the waist up the torso is perfectly frontal, but the legs and hips assume a contrapostal attitude with the right hip extended. The folds of the dhoti, which ends just beneath the knees, are indicated by incised lines in sets of two, and a cascade of rigid folds between the legs. The image is defined by a hard line. The chest is heavy but the torso round; the armpits are more deeply cut and the shoulders less tectonic and more sloping than in earlier images. Another inscribed image, of stone, of the same year, although of a seated female deity Tārā, is similarly conceived<sup>42</sup>. It was found at Hilsā, which is not far from Nālandā and also in Patna District. Unfortunately, the face is badly damaged.

Between the Viṣṇu and Tārā images on the one hand, and the seated Bodhisattva from the Nālandā stūpa (Fig. 32) on the other, belong three stone images now in the Nālandā Museum and a fourth from Sārnāth, as well as the Siddhaikavīra or Lokanātha image in Calcutta (Fig. 2). Among them the one closest to the stucco Bodhisattva and belonging most probably to the last half of the seventh century is a Nāgārjuna image in *līlāsana* (Fig. 34). The image was discovered at the main Stūpa<sup>43</sup>. Although superior to and, on the surface, more subtly modeled than the stucco Bodhisattva, the delineation and proportions of the Nāgārjuna are very similar. The head, however, is noticeably heavier and the features are broader. The lines of the eyebrows and mouth follow their own course, independent of the form. The necklace and sacred thread are beginning to assume a character of their own quite independent of the figure.

In two standing Bodhisattva Maitreya images, one from Nālandā (Fig. 35) and the other from Sārnāth (Fig. 36), which most probably belong to the early eighth century, there is again difficulty in the handling of the proportions of the torso. The broad and powerful chest and the sudden and rapid diminution of the torso toward the waist reflect the ambivalence and difficulties encountered in the standing Buddha and Bodhisattva stucco figures of the Nālandā stūpa. But the jewelry and other ornaments are even heavier. Both Maitreya figures are permeated with an unyielding rigidity, which similarly characterizes a probably contemporary Nālandā image of the female deity Kotiśrī (Fig. 37).

In the Kotiśrī or mother of seven thousand Buddhas<sup>44</sup>, as in the case of almost all female

<sup>41</sup> R. D. Banerji identified the image as a "Nāga". See: R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, A.S.I., New Imperial Series, Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1933, 21, Pl. Ib.

<sup>42</sup> J. C. French, *Art of the Pal Empire of Bengal*, London, Oxford University Press, 1928, Pl. IX and R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School*, Pl. IIb.

<sup>43</sup> A.S.R., E.C., 1919–1920, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

images, the proportions of the body are reversed, the hips are broad and the shoulders narrow. It almost appears as if we could turn the figure upside down with the result that the reversed outline of the female torso would conform perfectly to that of the upright male deities.

If in the images that follow, as for example in a huge Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara of black stone in the Nālandā Museum<sup>45</sup> or the Siddhaikavira in the Calcutta Museum (Fig. 2), the rigidity of the Maitreya and Kotisrī images appears less pervasive, it is only because of the more evident statement of a suggested contrapposto, and a somewhat subtler distribution of weight between the chest and abdomen. In reality the delineation of the images is just as rigid and confining; the limbs are just as columnar; the ornamentation is equally inflexible; the transition from one part of the body to another is equally sharp, and the images as a whole are just as brittle.

The Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara and the Siddhaikavira in all probability belong to the last half of the eighth century. They represent the culmination of the transition from the Gupta art of the previous centuries to the hieratic art of the Pāla period. They reflect, on the one hand, the additive and ideational qualities of the fifth century and, on the other, the experimentations of the sixth and early seventh centuries. By the second quarter of the seventh century a tightening and rigidity independent of the Sārnāth influence was already marked in the Shāhābād and Benisagar images in the east, and at Sāñchi in the west. At Nālandā, as a result of the revival of the Sārnāth influence, a new ambivalence with regard to the proportions of the torso suddenly appears but is finally reconciled. The suggestion of movement that was at times so vivid in the sixth century is by the eighth a simple formula.

### Pāhārpur

The date of origin and the religious affinity of the great monastery and temple of Pāhārpur in Rājshāhi District of northern Bengal have remained an open question. The earliest evidence we have of the existence of a religious establishment on the site is a copper plate of the Gupta year 159, or 478–479 A.D.<sup>46</sup>, which refers to a Jain *vihāra* of the Nirgranthanātha sect. According to Hsüan-tsang, the Nirgrantas were quite numerous in Puṇḍravardhana, or modern north Bengal, in the seventh century<sup>47</sup>. As K. N. Dikshit pointed out, “there is, however, no trace in the itinerary of the pilgrim of any site corresponding to the lofty temple and monastery at Pāhārpur, which could hardly have been missed by him. It can therefore be safely concluded that there was no Buddhist establishment at this site in the seventh century<sup>48</sup>”. Similarly, it is unlikely that any Jain establishment existed on the site. The Jain sect must have already been on the decline in Bengal at the time of Hsüan-tsang’s visit. Aside from his reference to their numbers, between the time of the 478–479 inscription and the fifteenth century, there is no evidence of them having been in Bengal. They seem to have disappeared from the scene<sup>49</sup>.

At the end of the eighth century, as we know from seventeenth century Tibetan sources such as Tārānath, and the author of the *Pag Sam Jon Zang*, Dharmapāla erected a Buddhist

<sup>45</sup> Zimmer, *op. cit.*, Pl. 377.

<sup>46</sup> *Epigraphica Indica*, XX, 59–64.

<sup>47</sup> Watters, *op. cit.*, II, 184, 187.

<sup>48</sup> K. N. Dikshit, *Pāhārpur*, M. A. S. I., No. 55, Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1938, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

monastery and *vihāra* at Somapura, the modern Pāhārpur. The center was in turn supported in the ninth century by Dharmapāla's son Devapāla and in the tenth and eleventh centuries by the later Pāla kings<sup>50</sup>. We have no record, however, of activities at Pāhārpur between 478–479 and the time of Dharmapāla c. 770.

We know that the Pāla kings were Buddhists. Most of the stone sculptures, however, adorning the basement level of the temple or *vihāra* are Brahmanical. Many deal with the Kṛṣṇa legend and others are Śaivite. Stylistically, they conform to what we would expect to find in the seventh and early eighth centuries. It is primarily among the Buddhist images that the characteristics of the Pāla style are to be noted.

Most probably Pāhārpur had been abandoned by the Jains by the seventh century and during the time of Śaśāṅka's rule was taken over by Hindus and supported under his aegis. As previously mentioned, Śaśāṅka was a devoted Śaivite. He died in 637–38 and the history of Bengal after his death until the time of the Pālas is very uncertain. The beginnings of the Brahmanical remains that have been found at Pāhārpur must date to Śaśāṅka's reign. On the site of the Buddhist monastery and temple that was supported by the Pālas was undoubtedly an older Brahmanical establishment. Just how large this last was, it is impossible to say. Most probably, as noted by Dikshit, "the main fabric of the Pāhārpur temple and monastery has to be attributed to the time of the early Pāla emperors in the latter part of the eighth century", but the sculptural beginnings "must be traced to the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century A.D.<sup>51</sup>"

Stella Kramrisch originally grouped the Pāhārpur sculptures chronologically into three groups from the sixth to the eighth century. In 1933, however, she revised her opinion and dated all of the stone sculptures to the seventh century and divided them into two groups: those influenced by the contemporary work of Bihar and those belonging to a new indigenous tradition. S. K. Saraswati, following Kramrisch, divided the sculptures stylistically and chronologically into three groups. Kramrisch and Saraswati, however, agree that it is not from purely indigenous works that the style of the Pāla period of Bengal is derived, but rather from a combination of a local idiom on the one hand, and an eastern version of the western art, on the other<sup>52</sup>. The differences between pieces that Kramrisch and Saraswati note are in fact attributable to different stages in the development of the art of the period and not for the most part to local innovations. There are, however, as at Deogarh, qualitative differences that exist among the pieces of any given period at Pāhārpur. The stone sculptures are undoubtedly the work of many hands. Possibly the most finished and sophisticated among them were executed by sculptors imported from other areas, whose work local artists may have tried to emulate.

The same line of development that we traced from Rājgir to Deogarh through Shāhābād and Benisagar in the late sixth century and early seventh, and then through the seventh to the eighth century at Nālandā is apparent at Pāhārpur. Pāhārpur seems to pick up at the same point as Deo-

<sup>50</sup> U. N. Ghoshal, "Somapura – An Ancient Buddhist Monastery in Varendri", *Varendra Research Society's Monograph No. 5*, Rajshahi, Varendra Research Society, 1934, pp. 27–29. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>52</sup> See Stella Kramrisch, "Pāla and Sena Sculpture", *Rupam*, No. 40 (October, 1929), p. 108, and *Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, Y. W. C. A. Publishing House, 1933, p. 216, where a different view is held; S. K. Saraswati, "Early Sculpture of Bengal", *l. c.*, p. 32–38; and *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1957, p. 153–155. Saraswati's system of grouping does not hold together on stylistic grounds. The wrong pieces are grouped together. But it would be impossible to attempt within the scope of this paper to systematically break down his analysis piece by piece.

garh. No evidence of any earlier work such as the 473–476 Sārnāth images (Figs. 3 to 5) and the Biharail Buddha (Fig. 30), or the sixth century Sārnāth (Fig. 6) and Sāñchi (Figs. 19 and 20) images has been found at Pāhārpur. The historical and iconographical elements alike support an early seventh century date for the *Rāmāyaṇa* or Kṛṣṇa legend images at Pāhārpur. For it is during Śāśārika's reign that it is most likely that a Brahmanical center was established at Pāhārpur and as K. N. Dikshit notes, Pāhārpur is the earliest known center of Kṛṣṇa worship in Bengal.

Stylistically, the stone sculptures of Pāhārpur closely parallel the developments of the seventh and eighth centuries throughout the rest of northern India. The same sense of liveliness and exuberance that we encountered at Deogarh, and especially in the more freely executed reliefs adorning the walls (Fig. 10) and projections of the platform (Figs. 11 to 13) on which the sanctum stands, is evident in the *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs at Pāhārpur. Perhaps the spirit of the Pāhārpur reliefs is best captured by number 25<sup>53</sup>, the figure of a dancing female (Fig. 38).

The delight in movement that we encounter in the reliefs at Pāhārpur is at times, in the more accomplished pieces, accompanied by a clear and rhythmic delineation of the image — as in the figure of the dancing female (Fig. 38), or number 3 of Kṛṣṇa uprooting the twin Arjuna trees<sup>54</sup>, or 18 of a Gandharva holding a garland<sup>55</sup> — comparable to the delineation of Gandharvas and central figures of the Nara-Nārāyaṇa and Anantaśāyī panels on the Deogarh sanctum.

In many of the cruder, but perhaps more charming, figures adorning the Pāhārpur basement walls the delight in movement that concerned the sculptors appears almost as an end in itself, as on the Deogarh platform reliefs. The heads, the legs, the arms and torsos of these Pāhārpur figures all move in varied and opposing directions, in a kind of helter-skelter manner that seems to revel in the freedom of the joints. Among the most complicated of these is relief 1<sup>56</sup>, which has been identified by Dikshit as a representation of the Pralaribāsura incident<sup>57</sup>. According to the Purāṇas, a demon who disguised himself in the form of a cowherd set out to kill Kṛṣṇa. He first tried, however, to carry off Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's brother, but as soon as he lifted him he was crushed under the weight of Balarāma and killed.

In reliefs 8 and 19, the sculptor is struggling with the same plastic problem, the body under a weight. In relief 8<sup>58</sup>, a representation of a man carrying stones, the artist appears to have used the most unlikely pose for the purpose simply to activate the figure and to emphasize the movement. The torso and legs bend in opposite directions, and despite the cursory rendering of the chest and arms, the slight twist of the abdomen is sufficient to create the impression of physical strain and prowess, although it is perfectly obvious that the legs could not support the figure. Similarly, in panel 19<sup>59</sup> we are confronted with a rather swaggering Kṛṣṇa whose chest and hips move in counter-directions as he lifts Mount Govardhana. His arms, his head and torso are all engaged in different activities as he lifts the mountain, embraces a female figure to his right and pushes aside a huddled male figure to his left.

<sup>53</sup> The 63 Pāhārpur stone reliefs are numbered consecutively according to their position on the basement wall of the temple. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, Ground Plan of the Main Temple at Pāhārpur.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 28d.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 34d.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 29a.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 38b.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 28c.

In still other reliefs, as for example those of a watchman<sup>60</sup>, a standing figure<sup>61</sup>, a standing woman<sup>62</sup>, a boy holding a lump of butter<sup>63</sup>, and a man seized by two boys<sup>64</sup>, the concern to deal with the figure in motion is equally apparent and similarly treated. The potential capabilities and varied directions of the parts of the body are suggested and expressed by the movement of the surface contours, and the position of the limbs is defined by the delineation of the image.

A certain stiffness, elongation of the limbs, and mannered quality are to be noted in relief 13 of the offering of poison to Śiva<sup>65</sup>. Just as the figures of the Gajendra-mokṣa panel at Deogarh hinted what was to come, so do the figures in this relief as well as those of two amorous couples<sup>66</sup> herald the developments at Pāhārpur. The characteristics of numbers 4, 61 and 34 of Śiva<sup>67</sup>, Brahmā (Fig. 39) and Agni<sup>68</sup> respectively, closely parallel the developments evident in the late Shāhabād (Figs. 15, 16 and 24) and Benisagar (Figs. 25 to 28) images. In each instance the figure is held together by an inflexible and confining outline with the position of the limbs only serving to reinforce the central mass of the figure, which nonetheless is made up of individual and separable parts.

As at Nālandā, as a result of the revival of the Sārnāth influence, the sculptors at Pāhārpur in the period that followed appear to have been struggling with the same problems of proportions and stance. Most probably the Sārnāth influence reached Pāhārpur via Nālandā. Two standing Śiva images from Pāhārpur, 37<sup>69</sup> and 40 (Fig. 40) closely parallel a similar Bodhisattva image from Sārnāth (Fig. 36) not only in the rigidity of the stance, the proportions of the elongated and columnar legs, the broad and weighty chests and the heavy head, but in the inflexible metallic and chain-like quality of the ornamentation as well. The stone sculptures at Pāhārpur reflect the developments that were occurring wherever there were contemporaneous centers of artistic activity in northern India.

<sup>60</sup> No. 9, *Ibid.*, Pl. 35b.

<sup>61</sup> No. 6, *Ibid.*, Pl. 35a.

<sup>62</sup> No. 28, *Ibid.*, Pl. 29d.

<sup>63</sup> No. 46, *Ibid.*, Pl. 35d.

<sup>64</sup> No. 48, *Ibid.*, Pl. 29c.

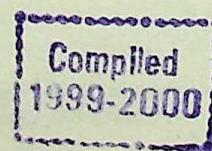
<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 31c.

<sup>66</sup> No. 14, *Ibid.*, Pl. 37a and No. 22, *Ibid.*, Pl. 27c.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 31b.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 32b.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 31d.



प्रस्तकालय, गुरुकुल काशी विश्वविद्यालय  
हारिद्वार।

SHEILA L. WEINER

FROM GUPTA TO PĀLA SCULPTURE

This study is concerned with the stylistic development of northern Indian sculpture from the late fifth to the early eighth century. It traces the evolutionary process set in motion at Sārnāth in the late fifth century that led to the art of the Pāla period. It deals with the art of Sāñchī and Deogarh to the west and relates those sites and the Sārnāth influence to Rājgir, Mundesvari, Benisagar, Nālandā, and Pāhārpur to the east. The origins of the art of the Pāla period in Bihar and Bengal are shown to be rooted in the past, in a common Indian perceptual realization of the human figure that emanated from Sārnāth and was shared by Buddhist, Hindu and Jain art throughout northern India.

This study was first published in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XXV, 1962



Price: Swiss francs 12.— or U. S. \$ 3.—